

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), PL 104-208, is the successor to the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), in effect since 1957. Enacted October 1, 1996, in unbroken continuity with the expiration of the LSCA, September 30, 1996, the LSTA is administered in California by the California State Librarian. Each year since the inception of LSCA, the State Librarian has awarded local assistance grants on a competitive basis for locally initiated proposals which meet the purposes of the Act. Grants continue to be awarded on a competitive basis beginning with funds available in 1997/98. In recent years, California has received approximately \$13 million annually for LSCA; the LSTA allotment is about \$14 million for 2000/01. The awards made range typically from \$5,000 to as much as \$500,000 for instances such as major targeted programs or efforts having significant statewide impact. Successful projects begin on October 1 of each federally specified grant year and conclude on September 30 of the following year.

The LSTA extended certain of the provisions of the LSCA for library programs in the area of services to special populations, expands the emphasis on technology, and encourages resource sharing and inter-library cooperation. Other changes in the administration of projects, such as a greater emphasis on evaluation of tangible project outcomes and benefits, are being implemented.

The major provisions of LSTA cover:

Technology, Networking, and Resource Sharing

- Qualified projects involve linkages among libraries, linkages with other services, access to information, consortia and multitype library networking to increase sharing of resources and information, and acquisition of information technology and telecommunications.

Targeted Library and Information Services

- Qualified projects involve library services to people who are underserved--those who are disadvantaged, geographically isolated, illiterate, disabled, or who are having difficulty using a library.

Eligible libraries include libraries of all types: academic, corporate, institutional, public, cooperative library systems, school, and special.

Each year some three million or more Californians benefit directly from a variety of library service projects which, reaching back to the beginning of the program, have included startup of bookmobile service (one of the first "outreach" initiatives), books by mail, and other innovations for delivery of materials and information; improved collections in languages for non-English speaking residents; early reading readiness programs for young children; homebound visits to the aged; additional services for the blind and physically handicapped; and coordinated public information programs on what library services provide. Recently, technology programs have come to the forefront as libraries position themselves to take advantage of new electronic avenues such as the Internet, serve as intermediaries and trainers of the public, and, via both on-site and remote facilities, to empower people to participate fully in the opportunities of the Information Age.

Indirectly, the entire State's population benefits through LSTA assistance to library and cooperative library system operations such as specialized reference, support to non-conventional acquisitions, subsidies for advanced cataloging and conversion of records to computer format, and underwriting of programs of statewide concern, such as a union database of serial publications and locations. Federal funds used in this way to aid libraries are among the most direct and visible benefits that citizens see as a return for their federal tax dollars.

Language of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), PL 104-208, has two main purposes, those spelled out under "Technology, Networking, and Resource Sharing" and those related to "Targeting Library and Information Services." The language of the Act pertaining to these objectives is extracted below.

The overall intent of the Act:

"SEC 212. PURPOSE.

It is the purpose of this subtitle--

- (1) to consolidate Federal library service programs;
- (2) to stimulate excellence and promote access to learning and information resources in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages;
- (3) to promote library services that provide all users access to information through State, regional, national, and international electronic networks;
- (4) to provide linkages among and between libraries;
- and
- (5) to promote targeted library services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to people with limited functional literacy or information skills."

The more specific priorities expressed in the Act:

"SEC. 231. GRANTS TO STATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.--Of the funds provided to a State library administrative agency under Section 214, such agency shall expend, either directly or through subgrants or cooperative agreements, at least 96% of such funds for--

- (1)
 - (A) establishing or enhancing electronic linkages among libraries;
 - (B) electronically linking libraries with educational, social, or information services;
 - (C) assisting libraries in accessing information through electronic networks;
 - (D) encouraging libraries in different areas, and encouraging different types of libraries, to establish consortia and share resources; or
 - (E) paying costs for libraries to acquire or share computer systems and telecommunications technologies; and
- (2) targeting library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line

(as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)) applicable to a family of the size involved."